



the professional association for design

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April 9, 2008

Commissioner Rosemary Rodriguez, Chair
U.S. Election Assistance Commission
1225 New York Avenue, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005

Subject: AIGA Design for Democracy comments on draft voluntary voting system guidelines (VVSG)

Dear Chairwoman Rodriguez:

As you know, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) recently created ballot and voter information design guidelines as described in the 2007 report, "Effective Designs for the Administration of Federal Elections." These guidelines were developed by AIGA Design for Democracy, a nonpartisan not-for-profit professional association, drawing on the nation's leading information design professionals. AIGA Design for Democracy strongly recommends that technical guidelines for *Optical Scan* and *Direct Recording Electronic (DRE)* touch-screen ballots found in this report be reflected in standards adopted as part of the VVSG.

The following technical guidelines, extrapolated from "Effective Designs for the Administration of Federal Elections" are relevant for inclusion in the VVSG. For instance, the VVSG should state that **systems producing ballots for voters should be capable of:**

- **Displaying readable text.** Left-aligned, upper- and lowercase sans serif type; for *Optical Scan* set at a minimum of 10 points, preferably 12 points, with 2 additional points of line spacing (leading); for *Rolling DRE* set at a minimum of 25 points. Ballot measure text and other long passages should be able to be typeset at 40-60 characters per line.
- **Providing navigational support.** For *Optical Scan*, providing current and total page number in upper right corner as well as appropriately placed, prominent instructions for continuation or completion. For *DRE* orienting voters to where they are within the process (select language, vote, review, cast) and making it easy to make, view and change selections including voting, display/output and language selections at any point in the process.
- **Providing process support.** Offering voters easy access to general and contest/question specific instructions; supporting accurate, instructional illustrations/diagrams that help voters understand requirements, processes and options. For *DRE* displaying number of votes remaining in multi-selection contests and under-voting notifications and ensuring that voters can easily compare their on-screen voting record with their printed record.

- **Supporting color for functional use while not establishing color as the sole means of communicating information or making distinctions.** For *Optical Scan* limiting color usage to two colors where the second color is used exclusively for instructions. For *DRE* supporting the use of color where it helps differentiate between levels or types of information or helps to cue voter interactions.
- **Featuring informational icons** such as arrows and exclamation points to draw attention to unique or important areas of the ballot or to improve the voter's ability to scan dense information.

Further, the VVSG should require that **systems producing ballots for voters should be capable of supporting all additional technical specifications asserted in the report, "Effective Designs for the Administration of Federal Elections,"** found on pages: 3.6-3.57 (*Optical Scan*); 4.6-4.25 (*Full-face DRE*); 5.6-5.37 (*Rolling DRE*). We urge VVSG authors to review this report in its entirety.

Please note: "Effective Designs for the Administration of Federal Elections" also features management guidelines for voting systems; AIGA Design for Democracy will be pleased to identify these separately.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please contact us with any questions.

Yours very truly,

Jessica Friedman Hewitt
Managing director, AIGA Design for Democracy

cc: Commissioner Caroline Hunter
Commissioner Gracia Hillman
Commissioner Donetta Davidson
Executive Director Tom Wilkey
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